

INTRODUCTION

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Michigan has 15 public 4-year universities located throughout the state. These institutions range from those having large undergraduate, graduate, and professional student populations to one with a student population of just over 3,000. Michigan universities participate in complex academic and research activities, provide undergraduate programs in the liberal arts, and offer specialized areas of studies such as engineering and vocational-technical programs. Together these institutions of higher education offer comprehensive and diverse programs, including adult education, general studies, and professional training in law, medicine, veterinary medicine, optometry, and dentistry. While the diversity of programs at these institutions is great, similar programs within the general liberal arts curriculum are offered at all schools, providing residents with convenient access to nonspecialized educational programs.

Higher education enjoys a relatively autonomous structure in Michigan. The Constitution of 1963, which created the current State Board of Education, authorizes the boards of control of the individual public universities to supervise their respective institutions and to control expenditure of institutional funds. Three of the public 4-year universities are supervised by individual boards of control elected by the voters of Michigan while each remaining public university is governed by a board of control appointed by the governor.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Michigan's 28 community colleges provide: 1) higher education opportunities to citizens for whom the cost, location of state universities and private colleges, or academic entrance requirements are barriers to attendance; 2) job training and retraining opportunities, including vocational, avocational, and nondegree courses and programs that may not be offered by other institutions; and 3) services that enhance the economic, cultural, intellectual, and social life of the community.

The Constitution of 1963 provides: "The legislature shall provide by law for the establishment and financial support of public community and junior colleges which shall be supervised and controlled by locally elected boards." This constitutional provision also established an 8-member State Board for Public Community Colleges to advise the State Board of Education in its general supervision and planning for community colleges. The creation and operation of community colleges are governed by Act 331 of 1966.

Students attend classes, either part-time or full-time, at one of Michigan's 28 public community colleges which are located throughout the state. Two colleges are located in the Upper Peninsula, six in the northern Lower Peninsula, and the remaining 20 in southern Michigan. Over 80% of Michigan's 9.8 million citizens live in a community college district.

Although traditionally offering 2-year programs, the Legislature enacted 2012 PA 495 to allow community colleges to grant baccalaureate degrees in cement technology, maritime technology, energy production technology, and the culinary arts. Other curriculum offerings include pre-professional, liberal arts, occupational, and vocational courses responsive to the needs of both the student who will transfer to a 4-year institution and the student who will be directly entering or reentering the labor force.

INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Michigan's independent colleges provide a variety of specialized education opportunities and environments that complement public education offerings. They offer certificate and associate degree programs; church-affiliated programs; baccalaureate programs, including liberal arts and teacher education; and graduate/professional programs leading to postgraduate degrees in many disciplines. Independent colleges are required to offer programs leading to a degree or offer 2 or more years of courses for transfer to a degree-granting Michigan institution of higher education recognized by the state. In addition to traditional course offerings for students, independent colleges provide special programs ranging from weekend courses for professionals to seminars for senior citizens. Special and continuing education courses often are held on weekends, evenings, and early mornings at locations both on and off campus.

Independent colleges and universities are recognized by the State Board of Education when they have been incorporated under Act 327 of 1931. The State Board of Education ensures that the articles of incorporation clearly define the educational activity of the proposed corporation and that specific limits are defined. Any unincorporated nonpublic colleges are also brought under the authority of the State Board of Education to establish minimum requirements for degrees or awards.